



Chishti and Shattari Saints of Malwa: Relations with the State

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Abstract

The vast region of Malwa, which became an independent Muslim Kingdom at the beginning of the fifteenth century and later on annexed to the Mughal empire as its suba under Akbar, attracted the Sufis to take up their abode there from the early fourteenth century. With the establishment of the different sufi orders in Malwa particularly the Chishti and the Shattari, a distinct culture in this territory began to develop. The lives of the sufis, their attitude towards the people, rulers and members of the state bureaucracy has been an important aspect of discussion among scholars in order to assess the influence and role of these spiritual kings in State matters and socio-cultural life of the people. In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the lives of the sufis of Malwa and their attitude towards state and the bureaucracy so that their role and influence in this part of the country may be assessed and highlighted. The paper is divided into two parts, the first deals with the Chishti sufis and the second one with the Shattari sufis.

Keywords: Chishti and Shattari Saints of Malwa

Introduction

The vast region of Malwa, which became an independent Muslim Kingdom at the beginning of the fifteenth century and later on annexed to the Mughal empire as its suba under Akbar, attracted the Sufis to take up their abode there from the early fourteenth century. With the establishment of the different sufi orders in Malwa particularly the Chishti and the Shattari, a distinct culture in this territory began to develop. The lives of the sufis, their attitude towards the people, rulers and members of the state bureaucracy has been an important aspect of discussion among scholars in order to assess the influence and role of these spiritual kings in State matters and socio-cultural life of the people. In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the lives of the sufis of Malwa and their attitude towards state and the bureaucracy so that their role and influence in this part of the country may be assessed and highlighted. The paper is divided into two parts, the first deals with the Chishti sufis and the second one with the Shattari sufis.

The Chishti Saints

The first sufi order to reach Malwa was that of the Chishtis. It was Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya who was first inclined towards the territory of Malwa which offered a tranquil base for the establishment and development of the Chishti order. He sent his three great Khalifas to Malwa for the establishment of the Chishti order as well as guidance of the people of the region. Shaikh Wajihuddin Yusuf (b. 1260) was the first to be deputed at Chanderi in Malwa. He died in 1328 and lies buried in Chanderi.¹ The other great sufi Shaikh Kamaluddin, son of Bayazid ibn Shaikh Nasiruddin Nasrullah after obtaining Khilafat from Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulaya was sent to Malwa for the guidance of the people. He reached Malwa and settled in the town of Dhar.²

Maulana Mughisuddin of Delhi was the third great Khalifa of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya to grace Malwa in the

year AD 1320. He settled in Ujjain and his shrine stands there.³

All three sufis earned reputation in Malwa. When Malwa came under the control of the Ghuri and the Khalji Sultans, their shrines seem to have attracted the notice of the Sultans and their bureaucracy. Sultan Mahmud Khalji (AD 1530) constructed a mausoleum over the grave of Shaikh Kamaluddin and a Khanqah and a large verandah stands nearby for the votaries of the silsilah.⁴

Their popularity in the region speak of their liberal and friendly attitude towards the people. Shaikh Wajihuddin Yusuf of Chanderi kept cordial relations with the people and therefore, a large section of the people became his murid and had great veneration for him.⁵ Similarly, Maulana Mughisuddin also had earned great respect from the people. On every Friday night people came to his shrine and distributed *nazar-o niyaz* (sweetmeats etc.) to Dervishes and the *sama* gathering was held there.⁶

Thus the Chishti silsila got a base in Malwa by the grace of these great Khalifas of Nizamuddin Auliya and it flourished in the region when a number of sufis came to settle there and made it their centre of activities and propagated and popularized the silsilah.

The first Chishti sufi who came to settle in Malwa on the request of the ruler of Malwa was Shaikh Husain of Multan. He had come from Multan to visit Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti's shrine of Ajmer. Sultan Mahmud Khalji I came to know about his presence in Ajmer. The Sultan sent Chisht Khan⁷, one of his nobles, to Shaikh Husain with the request that he should visit Mandu. Shaikh Husain settled in Mandu and after the death of Mahmud Khalji I, his son Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji took care of the Shaikh. When Humayun conquered the fort of Mandu, Shaikh Husain was present in Mandu.⁸



Another sufi of the Chishti silsila who was present when Humayun occupied Malwa was Syed Nizam of Mandu. He was the son of Syed Sharf and disciple of Shaikh Burhan Chishti. When Mandu was conquered by Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat in AD 1531, he went to pay a visit to Syed Nizam and presented to him a huge offering of money. Shaikh Nizam died in AD 1543 and was buried in Mandu near the tomb of his father.⁹

Shaikh Mahmud Chishti of Ranthambhor came to Malwa and settled in pargana Kujhawan¹⁰ near Mandu on the bank of river Narbada. He was granted *madad-i maash* for his livelihood and maintenance of his Khanqah by the officers of the time. Shaikh Mahmud died in 1550s and was buried in Kujhawan.¹¹

Another Chishti sufi Shaikh Khudabakhsh of Mandu was the disciple of Shaikh Fazlullah (d.1564)¹² of Mandu who was the son of Shaikh Husain Chishti of Multan. In 1573, Shaikh Khudabakhsh confined himself in an old mosque near the Sagar Talab and also got it repaired. The Shaikh remained in the mosque from 1573 to 1613-14, keeping strict seclusion and engaged himself in the sufi practices and devotion and attained to an exalted position in sufism. His attitude towards the State and bureaucracy was strict and he adhered to this principle throughout his life. He disallowed men of high status like emperors, governors, nobles to meet him.¹³

Malwa was graced by Shaikh Chadan ibn Umar Chishti who came to visit Malwa in the 1540s and stayed at Nalcha in Mandu and lived an austre and secluded life there. When Baz Bahadur, the Sultan of Malwa was defeated by the forces of Akbar under Adham Khan and Pir Muhammad was entrusted with the charge Mandu and Ujjain, Shaikh Chadan was present in Mandu. Pir Muhammad went to meet the Shaikh and told him about his plan of invading Khandesh. Shaikh Chadan did not permit him but asked to abandon the idea of conquering Khandesh. The Mughal officer did not pay heed to the saint's advice and began his military expedition. Pir Muhammad marched toward Burhanpur against Miran Mubarak Shah of Khandesh who was helping Baz Bahadur, the fugitive Sultan of Malwa. While returning from Burhanpur, he was hotly pursued by Baz Bahadur and was defeated and in his haste he tried to cross the Narbada on his horse to save his life but lost his life by drowning in the river alongwith his other horsemen. Shaikh Chadan died in 1581 and was buried in the courtyard of the mausoleum of Sultan Hoshang Shah.¹⁴

There was another Chishti sufi Shaikh Syed Hsan Hasaini who was born at Mandu. His *Pir* Shaikh Syed Ali Chishti had a direct lineage from Shaikh Muhammad Gesu Daraz. Shaikh Husaini was also benefitted from the service of Shaikh Mahmud Jalal Shattari and learned from him the knowledge of *tariqat*. For a period of twenty

years he lived in seclusion in a small cell (*kulba*) on *tawakkul* (trust in God). He never went to the door of the rich people or ruling class to demand anything.¹⁵

Another Chishti sufi Shaikh Maruf, son of Qazi Sadullah, was settled in Dhar, an important town of Malwa. He was the *Khalifa* of Shaikh Nizam of Narnaul. Shaikh Maruf's grandfather Shaikh Mahmud was also the Qazi of pargana Amjhera in Mandu during the period of the Khalji Sultans of Malwa. Shaikh Maruf lost his father in his childhood. After obtaining Khilafat from Shaikh Nizam, he returned to Dhar. We do not have information whether Shaikh Maruf was appointment the Qazi of Dhar or not. Shaikh Maruf had very friendly relations with Khan-i Azam Mirza Aziz Koka, the subadar of Malwa. In 1588, when the Shaikh decided to go on Haj pilgrimage, Mirza Aziz Koka who held him in great veneration asked him to postpone his journey. The Shaikh accepted the request. The following year Mirza Aziz Koka arranged money for the journey of his Umrah and Haj. Shaikh Maruf died in 1590 after performing the Haj either in Mecca or Medina.¹⁶

Shaikh Musa of Ujjain was also a great Chishti sufi of Malwa. He was a disciple and senior *Khalifa* of Shaikh Chadan of Mandsaur. When Akbar visited Malwa and arrived upto Dipalpur in the company of Shaikh Ziauddin Ghausi, Qazi Sadruddin Lahori, Qazi Jalaluddin and Sadr-us Sudur Shaikh Abdun Nabi, Shaikh Musa of Ujjain came to meet them in the royal camp. Sadr-us Sudur Shaikh Abdun Nabi fixed a befitting stipend for Shaikh Musa but the Shaikh refused to accept it.¹⁷

The Shattari Saints

Another important silsila that got a large base in Malwa was the Shattari. It was introduced in India by Shah Abdulla Shattari who was called as 'Hazrat-i Ala',¹⁸ among the Shattaris. Shah Abdulla Shattari was the *Khalifa* of Shaikh Muhammad Arif Taifuri.¹⁹ However, he was benefitted from the service and association of two eminent Suhrawardi sufis—Shaikh Muzaffar of Naishapur and Syed Ali Mowahid of Azerbaijan.²⁰ Syed Abdulla's method of work was unique. He traveled from place to place with pomp. He used to wear royal dress and the huge retinue of his disciples dressed themselves in military uniform. This band of his followers marched with banners and drums. He used to send messages to sufis in every village and town, which he visited and attracted common people by beat of drums. He always proclaimed that if some one knows better the meaning of *Kalima Tauhid*, should come forward and teach the traveller, otherwise get the teaching from him.²¹

Shah Abdulla Shattari arrived in India and after travelling from place to place he reached Chittor, the fortress of which was being besieged at this time by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji (1469-1500) of Malwa. The Sultan came to pay his respects to Shah Abdulla. With the



blessings of Shah Abdullah, the fortress was captured within a few days. Sultan Ghiyasuddin sent Shah Abdullah with full honour and respect to Mandu before his departure.²² Shah Abdullah established close personal contact with the Sultan of Malwa and dedicated to him his famous book, *Latif-i Ghaibia*.²³ Shah Abdullah Shattari died in 1485 and was buried in the fort of Mandu, south of the tombs of the Khalji Sultans of Malwa.²⁴ Jahangir paid a visit to the grave of Shah Abdullah, accompanied by Shah Pir, an eminent Shattari sufi and gave orders for the construction of a mausoleum over his grave.²⁵

Another Shattari sufi Shaikh Bahauddin (d.1515-1516) following Shah Abdullah Shattari left his native town and settled in Mandu at the request of the ruler of Malwa. He wrote a treatise entitled *Risala-i Shattaria*, which enhanced his prestige among the Shattaris and other learned men.²⁶

Shaikh Kamal Muhammad Abbasi, an eminent sufi of Shattari silsila was the Khalifa of Shaikh Wajihuddin Ahmad Alavi of Ahmadabad. He was a great Islamic scholar. In 1574 he migrated from Ahmadabad to be settled at Ujjain in Malwa. He was appointed *mufti* of the town. Shaikh Kamal died in 1604 and was buried in the same verandah where he used to deliver lectures.²⁷

One of the most prominent sufis of the Shattari silsila in Malwa was Shah Manjhan Shattari. He was educated in his grandfather's seminary at Lakhnauti in Bengal but it was the training of Taj-ul Urfa Syed Tajuddin of Bukhara that made Shah Manjhan an *alim* and a sufi. Taj-ul Urfa Syed Tajuddin came to India and joined Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus' service and obtained Khilafat from him. He introduced his disciple Shah Manjhan to Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus under whose guidance Shah Manjhan studied *Jawahar-i Khamsa*. Shaikh Ghaus was so impressed with Shah Manjhan's clear understanding of it that he presented to him his *Khirqa* which he used to wear during his long exercise in the Chunar hills.²⁸

When Sher Shah conquered Raisen and renamed it Islamabad in 1543, he invited Shah Manjhan to Raisen and appointed him Shaikh-ul Islam of the town as well as *Khanqahdar* (incharge of the seminary). In 1553 when the Rajputs reoccupied Raisen, Shah Manjhan migrated to Sarangpur and settled there. In 1578 when Akbar visited Malwa, he invited all sufis of suba Malwa to his camp for some special purpose. Shah Manjhan also went to meet the emperor. Shah Manjhan died in 1593 at Ashata.²⁹

Shaikh Hasan ibn Musa of Ahmadabad was the father of Muhammad Ghausi Shattari of Mandu, the author of *Gulzar-i Abrar*. He was a *hafiz* and a scholar of *fiqh* and *hadis*. After a Mughal attack on Gujarat in 1553,

Shaikh Hasan ibn Musa migrated to Malwa with Humayun's party and settled at Lonhera, three kos away from Mandu. Shaikh Hasan ibn Musa died in 1565.³⁰

Another important Shattari sufi in Malwa was Muhammad Ghausi Shattari (b.1554) of Mandu. He had friendly relations with almost all sufis of his time in suba Malwa and other contemporary sufis elsewhere which provided him vast material for his *Gulzar-i Abrar*.³¹ He completed this work sometime between 1611 and 1613. Ghausi has dedicated his book to emperor Jahangir both in the preface³² and at the end.³³ While dedicating his work to the emperor, Ghausi praises Jahangir which indicates that Ghausi saw him as a patron in compiling his work. Ghausi maintained good relations with the government officers.³⁴

The Chishtis - Relations with State

The study of the lives of the sufis of Chishti silsila in Malwa reveals that they generally avoided association with the rulers as also with their bureaucracy. Many of them were great *alims* (scholars) and lived simple and pious lives according to the principles of the Chishti order. A number of Chishti sufis earned their livelihood through labour as an ordinary man or engaged themselves in small business. For instance, Shaikh Nizam of Mandu earned his livelihood as a digger³⁵, Shaikh Abdul Wahab Afghan and Shaikh Syed Hasan of Mandu collected wood and grass from the forests and sold them in the market.³⁶ They even divided their meager earnings into three parts, one for their families, the second for themselves and the third for the poor and orphans. They not only restrained themselves from looking to the Sultans, emperors or government officers for obtaining *madad-i maash* grants or land assignments and government offices but also at times disallowed men of the ruling classes to meet them.

Contrary to this attitude, there were some of the Chishti sufis who accepted *madad-i maash* grants and other favours from the rulers but they spent the money in the construction of Khanqah buildings, tombs or distributed among the needy without discrimination of caste or religion.

The Chishti sufis in Malwa were given offices of the *qazi* etc. and these offices sometimes became hereditary. They gave advices to the rulers or their officers whenever they went to them for their advice or blessings.

Thus we find that in Malwa the Chishti sufis had great influence over the Sultans and their bureaucracy and later on over the Mughal officers in suba Malwa. Many of the Chishti sufis had come to settle in Malwa on the request of the rulers. Their simple lives and teachings of love and peace must have controlled the conduct of the rulers and their officers in the cities, towns and villages.



The Shattaris - Relations with State

Similarly, the Shattari sufis also came to settle in Malwa on the request of the Sultans of Malwa or provincial bureaucracy. The founder of the silsila, Shah Abdullah Shattari himself was sent to Mandu by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji with great honour and respect. Some of the sufis were appointed as *mufti*, *Shaikh-ul Islam*, *Khanqahdar*, etc. The Shattaris also earned great reputation among the people and the ruling class. We find two Shattari sufis, Shah Manjhan and Muhammad Ghausi Shattari visiting the royal camp when Akbar on his visit to Malwa in 1578 summoned all sufis of the suba for some special purpose. The general attitude of the Shattari sufis towards the Sultans of Malwa and Mughal emperors was friendly as a number of them had dedicated their treatises or books to them. But the evidence regarding these sufis maintaining close relations with the ruling class is lacking.

Conclusion

Thus summarily, it can be said that the sufis of Malwa inspired the rulers and the government officers to be kind towards the common men, to take interest in the schemes of public welfare and to do justice to the people. This way they influenced the state machinery and shaped the policies of rulers and their bureaucracy.

References

- [1] *Siyar-ul Auliya*, pp.286-7; Muhammad Ghausi Shattari, *Gulzar-i Abrar*, ed. Muhammad Zaki, Patna, p.90; K.A. Nizami, *Tarikh-i Mashaikh-i Chisht*, pp.213-4. *Akhbar-ul Akhyar*, tr. Maulana Subhan Mahmud and Maulana Muhammad Fazil, Delhi, 1990, p.214.
- [2] Later on Dhar became known as 'Piran-i Dhar' apparently owing its importance to the numerous saints who made it their centre of activities and are buried there (Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XI, p.294).
- [3] *Gulzar-i Abrar*, p.100.
- [4] *Ibid.*, p.511.
- [5] *Akhbar-ul Akhyar*, p.214.
- [6] *Gulzar-i Abrar*, p.100.
- [7] Chisht Khan was a well-known descendant of Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti. He was settled at Mandu. See S.L.H. Moini, "Dargah Khwaja Sahib at Ajmer: A Spiritual Rendezvous in the pre-Mughal Period" in Aligarh Papers on History (Unpublished Papers, CAS, AMU, 2000), pp.329-330.
- [8] *Ibid.*, pp.223-224.
- [9] *Ibid.*, pp.229-230.
- [10] Kujhawan is three kos away from Mandu (*Gulzar-i Abrar*, pp.256-257).
- [11] *Gulzar-i Abrar*, p.257.
- [12] *Ibid.*, pp.281-82.
- [13] *Ibid.*, pp.482-84.
- [14] *Ibid.*, pp.322-23; Mutamid Khan, *Iqbalnama-i Jahan-i*, Nawal Kishore, Lucknow, p.177; *Akbar-nama*, II, pp.167-68.
- [15] *Ibid.*, p.327-28.
- [16] *Ibid.*, pp.356-57.
- [17] *Ibid.*, p.316
- [18] Shah Abdullah is the first sufi with whose name the suffix Shattari appears in mystic literature.
- [19] *Gulzar-i Abrar*, p.147.
- [20] K.A. Nizami, "The Shattari Saints and their Attitude towards the State", *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. I, No.2, Aligarh, 1950, p.56.
- [21] *Gulzar-i Abrar*, pp.147-48.
- [22] *Ibid.*, p.148.
- [23] *Ibid.*
- [24] *Ibid.*, p.147.
- [25] *Ibid.*, p.148.
- [26] *Maarif-ul Walayat* (MS) as cited in K.A. Nizami, *op.cit*, p.57, f.n.3.
- [27] *Gulzar-i Abrar*, p.148.
- [28] *Ibid.*, p.424-25.
- [29] *Ibid.*, 340.
- [30] *Ibid.*, 341-42.
- [31] *Ibid.*, pp.608-11.
- [32] *Ibid.*, p.8.
- [33] *Ibid.*, p.551.